

THE HUMAN KIDNEY. WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW. By James F. Mowbray, M.B., B.Ch., M.R.C.P. and Richard A. Parker, M.D. (Pp. 58. 12s.). London: Chest and Heart Association, 1970.

THIS little book of 57 pages, according to its title has been written for everyone, but readers without previous knowledge of the kidney would find it difficult reading. In a book of this type the information needs to be presented in very simple form, in non-technical language, with ample clear illustrations.

This books contains five illustrations, most of which are not particularly helpful for the type of reader envisaged. One illustration is a microphotograph of the renal cortex and another an electron microphotograph of tubules, neither of which could convey much to the uninitiated reader. Renal histology can be of little value to those who are unaware of the normal anatomical relationships of kidneys, ureters, bladder, prostate and urethra, but a simple diagram showing these relationships has not been included. The section on dialysis would have been clearer had a simple diagrammatic representation of an artificial kidney been given and indeed the text refers to such a figure, but it in fact shows arterial and venous tubules leading from a shunt along a limb.

From the viewpoint of the more informed reader, there are a number of sweeping statements almost amounting to inaccuracies. At least one dangerously misleading statement is made "dialysis is now common practice in any hospital" . . . a statement which is clearly untrue and minimizes the amount of accurate "know-how" required for dialysis therapy to be successful.

A simple factual book describing the anatomy and functions of the kidney, containing a very brief outline of the main types of kidney disease, would be of value for the now numerous people without medical or nursing training who work in association with renal units. Such a book might also be useful for the families of patients suffering from terminal renal disease. Perhaps it could be written more easily by a renal physician, with his more continuous need to explain his work to lay people, than by authors working with research backgrounds in immunopathology and pathology, however distinguished they may be.

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